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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000438

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID/OTI(RPORTER)
HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/03/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: GENERAL BADUEL ARRESTED AGAIN

REF: 08 CARACAS 1422

Classified By: Francisco Fernandez, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (SBU) With guns drawn, plain clothed agents of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DIM), on April 2 unceremoniously pulled former Defense Minister General Raul Baduel out of his vehicle after leaving his sub-division in the city of Maracay. According to Baduel's wife, Cruz Maria Baduel, who was in the passenger seat, the general yelled "call the media" as he was being extracted from the car, at which point one of the gunmen pointed his weapon at her head and told her, "You're not calling anyone. We are the DIM." As Baduel was being shoved into one of the waiting vehicles, Cruz Maria claimed she shouted, "They are kidnapping General Baduel."

2 (SBU) Brigadier General Ernesto Cedenio of the Judge Advocate General told the press that the investigation into Baduel's "illegal enrichment" had amassed enough evidence to require his detention and that all laws and rights had been respected. Cedenio added that Baduel would be arraigned in 30 days. (Note: Corruption charges are also being used by the Attorney General against Maracaibo mayor, and leading opposition figure, Manuel Rosales. End Note.) Baduel was similarly detained (Reftel) in October 2008 and had been appearing before a military judge every 15 days as a condition of his release.

¶3. (C) According to retired VADM Mario Ivan Carratu Molina (Protect), there is no linkage between Baduel's arrest and efforts to apprehend Rosales, although both have occurred simultaneously. Carratu told PolOff that Baduel had allegedly been in discreet contact with active duty military officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Carratu also claimed that Baduel was attempting to convince the armed forces to remain garrisoned in the case of anti-Chavez demonstrations, supposedly at the behest of a loose coalition of opposition groups.

¶4. (C) Comment: Baduel is now at the mercy of Hugo Chavez. While claims that Baduel was attempting to keep the military on the sidelines seem far fetched, Baduel's reputation as a military institutionalist would have made him a natural sounding board for officers uneasy about Chavez's use of the military to expand his powers. Whatever the merits of the underlying corruption case, Baduel's incarceration means another political obstacle has been removed from Chavez's path. End Comment.
CAULFIELD